



The Royal Institute of Art launches *The Domain of the Great Bear*

with: "Information, Image, Story: Some Conceptual Aspects of Contemporary Art"

A Lecture by Peter Osborne, Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University, London

ABOUT THE LECTURE

As the didactic titles of three canonical New York exhibitions indicate (*The Machine at the End of the Mechanical Age* curated by Pontus Hulten (1968) and 'Information' curated by Kynaston Mc Shine (1970) both at MoMA, and 'Software: Information Technology – Its New Meaning for Art' (1970) curated by Jack Burnham at the Jewish Museum) analyses of the social significance of conceptual art have tended to rely upon technologically based narratives about the changing communicational forms of modernity. Walter's Benjamin's 1936 account of the 'destruction of tradition' and the replacement of 'the story' by 'information' has provided a model here. On the one hand, the uses of digital imaging in contemporary art appear to confirm and extend such technological narratives of conceptual content (misrecognized as 'dematerialization' and 'immaterial labour'), yet, on the other, they complicate them by virtue of the pervasiveness of the image.

The Kantian philosophical self-consciousness of much early Conceptual art opposed 'concept' to 'intuition' – logic to aesthetic – in a formally 'failed' but artistically productive experimental absolutization of anti-aesthetic. The postconceptual character of contemporary art, on the other hand, is largely played out in the relations between concepts and images, in particular in the *moving* image. Such art is preoccupied less with issues of objecthood and its destruction (or deconstruction), and more by relations between narrative and image, between documentary and fictional narratives.

A body of work that is concerned to mark its contemporaneity, in the now-global context of the artworld, by establishing 'living' relations to this new historical actuality has placed narrativity (often in the form of testimony) increas-

ingly at the heart of the constructed filmwork. One way to approach the post-conceptual character of contemporary art is thus via the changing relations between *information*, *image* and *story* in uses of documentary film as art.

Here, recent film installations by the artist Akram Zaatar (*In this House*, 2005 and *Letter to a Refusing Pilot*, 2013) will serve as a model such. One thing at stake in its analysis is the question of what it means for a work to function both as an interpretative model and to take a technology as a model. Artists' appropriations of technology, it will be argued, must subject it to dictates of form that are craft-technical in character, but not themselves technological.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Peter Osborne is Professor of Modern European Philosophy and Director of the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy (CRMEP), Kingston University London, and an editor of the British journal *Radical Philosophy*. His books include *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (1995; 2011), *Philosophy in Cultural Theory* (2000), *Conceptual Art* (2002), *Marx* (2005), *El arte más allá de la estética: Ensayos filosóficos sobre el arte contemporáneo* (CENDEAC, Murcia, 2010) and most recently, *Anywhere or Not at All: Philosophy of Contemporary Art*, Verso, 2013. Catalogue essays include contributions to *Manifesta 5*, Tate Modern, Biennale of Sydney, Walker Art Center Minneapolis, Office of Contemporary Art Norway, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design Oslo, CGAC Santiago de Compostela, and Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León. He recently led the AHRC research project on 'Transdisciplinarity and the Humanities' (2011–13).

ABOUT THE DOMAIN OF THE GREAT BEAR

"Information, Image, Story" initiates the Royal Institute of Art's series *The Domain of the Great Bear*. *The Domain of the Great Bear* is a newly initiated research platform of the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm – a series of public lectures, workshops and events focusing on art and production and the changing nature of conditions for that production to address the challenges and aspirations for anyone claiming the category of artist. Sourcing the title of the series from the 1966 canonical layout by Mel Bochner and Robert Smithson, the platform pays homage to Bochner's wish to, at that time, "expand the range of philosophical, psychological, political and visual ideas that one's work could engage." Locating NY's Hayden Planetarium as both the subject and the decoy of the work, the project served to plant "an intellectual time bomb inside the art system's machinery" – as a way to, according to the artists "to search for the grin without the cat."

The Domain of the Great Bear serves as KKH's will as an institution to plant within the public domain a set of attitudes about art, architecture, knowledge and culture that extend from historicity forwards, and *visa versa* – forwards, backwards – to serve as a larger conversation piece about anything that claims itself as or beyond the art world. *The Domain of the Great Bear* will be launched in September 2014 and will continue....

